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### War crimes and the Parisian regulation approach: representations of the crisis of antipodean fordism

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## War crimes and the Parisian regulation approach: representations of the crisis of antipodean fordism

### Abstract

The crisis of global (and Australian) capitalism that began in the early 1970s was a phenomenon that has been the subject of many competing explanations. Often, however, these accounts artificially separate the economic and the cultural as forces of social change. The result can be forms of reductionism that, although acknowledging important causal factors, fail to link the economic and extra-economic moments of capitalism within a theoretically rigorous political economy. This article deploys a critical political economy perspective that unifies the economic and the cultural within the capitalist mode of production. We do this through a study of Peter Carey's novella, *War Crimes*<sup>1</sup> (1996, first published in 1978), appearing at a critical juncture in the crisis of post-war Australian capitalism. In particular, our work represents both an extension of the work of Terry Eagleton (1976a, 1976b), Pierre Macherey (1978), Fredric Jameson (1981) and Michael Wilding (1981)<sup>2</sup> in materialist literary theory and its unification with the Parisian Régulation Approach (PRA).

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# **WAR CRIMES AND THE PARISIAN RÉGULATION APPROACH: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE CRISIS OF ANTIPODEAN FORDISM**

**Brett Heino and James Dahlstrom**

The crisis of global (and Australian) capitalism that began in the early 1970s was a phenomenon that has been the subject of many competing explanations. Often, however, these accounts artificially separate the economic and the cultural as forces of social change. The result can be forms of reductionism that, although acknowledging important causal factors, fail to link the economic and extra-economic moments of capitalism within a theoretically rigorous political economy. This article deploys a critical political economy perspective that unifies the economic and the cultural within the capitalist mode of production. We do this through a study of Peter Carey's novella, *War Crimes*<sup>1</sup> (1996, first published in 1978), appearing at a critical juncture in the crisis of post-war Australian capitalism. In particular, our work represents both an extension of the work of Terry Eagleton (1976a, 1976b), Pierre Macherey (1978), Fredric Jameson (1981) and Michael Wilding (1981)<sup>2</sup> in materialist literary theory and its unification with the Parisian *Régulation* Approach (PRA).

*War Crimes* has been described as a satirical 'microcosm of the advertising world' (Lamb, 1992: 21) or a portrayal of the mentality that

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1 In this article we refer to Peter Carey's short story *War Crimes*, not the collection of short stories with the same title. The title has been italicised in the text for aesthetic reasons.

2 Although these works date from the 1970s and 1980s, we believe that the materialist account of literature they forward remains both valid and necessary, and is moreover lacking in most recent work on literary theory.

equates business with war. Hassall (1994: 58, 61-62) argues: 'The protagonist is a punk capitalist who anticipates uncannily the corporate cowboys of ugly 1980s ... [he] may be half-mad, but he tells it like it is, exposing its true dynamics from inside the system, and white-anting the hypocrisy of the New Right. It is a searing vision.' Woodcock (2003: 23) confirms this description: 'Written in the late 1970s, this prophetic story envisaged capitalism entering "its most picturesque phase," and anticipated the savage market-forces world of the 1980s in a fantastic yet unnervingly accurate way.' In this article we extend and deepen this reading by showing 'the historical and ideological nature of [Carey's] work in the context of its period' (Macherey 1978: 107). Given the abundant textual clues and historical and cultural references,<sup>3</sup> *War Crimes* is transparently, albeit implicitly, set in the context of 1970s-1980s Australian capitalism. We thus discuss the novella as an esoteric allegory for the decline of the unique configuration of post-war Australian capitalism which, using the concepts and methodology of the PRA, we dub *antipodean Fordism* (Heino, 2014).

The crisis of antipodean Fordism represents the decline of a structured totality with a range of economic, political and cultural dimensions. A comprehensive understanding of the economic and political moments of the crisis of world Fordism is the signal achievement of the PRA. However, the approach has not been used as extensively to analyse the cultural manifestations of these processes (Jessop & Sum, 2006). This is not due to any inherent limitation in *régulationist* methodology; rather, the fixation on economics appears to be due to the fact that many influential *régulationists* are economists (Jessop & Sum, 2006). We address this issue by unifying the PRA with a materialist theory of literature, which allows us to comprehend how the concrete history of antipodean Fordism imprinted itself upon *War Crimes*. In so doing we explore the crisis of post-War Australian capitalism in both its economic *and* cultural dimensions and analyse how the resultant tensions are refracted in the text.

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3 These include the author's use of a distinctly Australian lexicon (including Australian nicknames), descriptions of an Australian landscape and uniquely Australian flora and fauna, veiled references to Australian history and to an emerging Australian style of business dubbed 'larrikin capitalism.' See *War Crimes* (pp. 311, 313, 315, 317, 323, 324, 326, 327, and 332); Turner (1994: 26); and Potts and Potts (1985: 247).

## Theoretical Framework

In unifying Marxist literary theory with the PRA, we contend that a promising new synthesis has been developed. However, we must first locate our work *vis-à-vis* both bodies of theory.

### Literary Theory

In the 1970s and 1980s, the advent of neo-Marxism (in particular Althusserian structuralism) proved fertile ground for theorising a genuinely materialist conception of literature. The literary text is not a product of chance, but is a creation of the social relations in which it is embedded (Macherey, 1978). Literary texts are bound up in complex, over-determined and unevenly developing relationships with the author's ideology, general ideology and the capitalist mode of production generally (Eagleton, 1976).<sup>4</sup> Acknowledging that texts do not exist in isolation, a materialist literary theory must address what the text 'knows' and how it knows it (Macherey, 1978). In this context, the gaps and omissions of the text can be as telling as the content itself (Eagleton, 1976b).

The most pressing manifestation of these questions is the relationship between the text and history. If we are to read *War Crimes* as emblematic of the decline of antipodean Fordism, there must be elements of history that 'enter' the text. Eagleton (1976a, 1976b) has described the relationship between history and the text as an inherently ideological one, with the historical 'real' entering the text precisely as ideology. This ideological representation of history is neither crudely determined by class forces nor voluntarist. Wilding (1981: 65)—whose essay in this journal began with a broader survey of literature and then narrows its focus to an Australian context—notes that, 'Literature is a transmitter of human consciousness, a record of data, and is as much a source of evidence as history or statistics. But ... literature does not offer some pure, value-free objective evidence.' Instead, the image of the historical

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4 This also militates against simplistically deducing the ideological effects of literature through asking the author what they meant. Often, authors are sites of contradiction, with their texts saying more or less than they mean them to. Together with the logistics of organising an interview, this understanding underlies our decision not to attempt to talk to Carey directly.

real refracted in the text bears the imprint of the class relations in which it was conceived. Eagleton (1976b: 3) adds:

Literary works are not mysteriously inspired, or explicable simply in terms of their authors' psychology. They are forms of perception...and as such they have a relation to that dominant way of seeing the world which is the 'social mentality' or ideology of an age. That ideology, in turn, is the product of the concrete social relations into which men enter at a particular time and place; it is the way those class-relations are experienced, legitimized and perpetuated. Moreover, men are not free to choose their social relations; they are constrained into them by material necessity—by the nature and stage of development of their mode of economic production ... *ideology is never a simple reflection of a ruling class's ideas; on the contrary, it is always a complex phenomenon, which may incorporate conflicting, even contradictory, views of the world* (our emphasis).

Literature is thus in a unique position *vis-à-vis* the mode of production of which it is part. It is an inescapably social product which is profoundly influenced by the historical conjuncture in which it is generated. However, it is capable of combining within its materiality conflicting ideologies, negating any simplistic assumption that literature serves unproblematically as a vehicle of dominant class interests. When combined with the inherent malleability of language, this contradictory position means that literature can serve as an ideological critique of the mode of production which spawned and structures it.<sup>5</sup>

This abstract tendency towards fragmented meaning within literature is particularly pronounced in times of economic and social crisis (epochs that Dahlstrom, 2011, has dubbed historical 'pressure points'). To the extent that ideological forms cohere and reproduce capitalist social relations smoothly, it tends to be within stable phases of capital accumulation. In times of crisis the ideological structures underpinning consent to capitalist social relations are thrown into disarray. This process has a distinct literary aspect. Eagleton (1976a: 20) notes that literature, and aesthetic forms more broadly, often tends to 'foreground' issues over which the entire ideological formation broods. Indeed, the

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5 As Jessop (1988: 155) notes, although economic, juridic and ideological forms may be inscribed in capitalist social relations, this does not guarantee they can perform the functions required of them.

contradictions of ideology may hold the key to understanding the economic contradictions of a certain phase of capitalism, a point we shall argue in our reading of *War Crimes*.

In this context, the goal of literary criticism is to restore to a 'text the repressed and buried reality of [its] fundamental history' with the intention of showing that a text is not necessarily a replication of ideology, but can also have the function of negating ideology; it can be a 'revolt against ... the increasing dehumanization of the level of daily life' (Jameson, 1981: xii, 4, 27). A Marxist cultural study would decode both the ideological functions and dysfunctions of a literary text (Jameson, 1981). This conception of literature allows us to understand the processes by which the historical real imprints itself upon the text, and allows us to read Carey's *War Crimes* as a revolt against the dehumanisation of Australian workers produced by the crisis of antipodean Fordism.

It is apposite here to turn to the second leg of our theoretical framework, namely the deployment of the concepts and methodology of the PRA in the Australian context. It is this body of theory that is best placed to understand the specific structures and contradictions of distinct epochs of capitalism.

### **The Parisian *Régulation* Approach**

The PRA emerged in the late 1970s, stemming from Aglietta's (1979) path-breaking account of the development of American capitalism, and part of a broader reaction to the 'fossilised', Stalinist Marxism of European communist parties (Jessop & Sum, 2006). It was derived from structural Marxism, but nevertheless represented a departure from several of the latter's key tenets, notably the Althusserian conception of social reproduction as quasi-automatic (Jessop, 1988). Instead, *régulationists* emphasised the inherently improbable character of capital accumulation, a function of the contradictions inscribed in capitalist social relations (Jessop & Sum, 2006). At root, these contradictions stem from the paradoxical character of the commodity as a (dis)unity of use-value and exchange-value (Marx, 1990). This tension manifests itself in different forms at various stages in the circuit of capital. As Jessop and Sum (2006: 329) note:

The commodity is both an exchange value and a use value; the worker is both an abstract unit of labour power ... and a concrete

individual with specific skills, knowledge and creativity; the wage is both a cost of production and a source of demand ... productive capital is both abstract value in motion ... and a concrete stock of time-and place-specific assets in the course of being valorized ...

These contradictions express themselves differently and to varying degrees of importance in disparate historical contexts. The circuit of capital is thus wrought with structural contradictions which render continued capital accumulation inherently crisis-prone. The necessary question in light of this characterisation was how capitalism could be made stable for periods of time, as was the case in the post-World War Two decades until the early 1970s.

The answer was what the French dubbed *régulation*. Capital accumulation, and the tendential laws governing it, can be guided and regularised through a contingent, historically variant combination of economic and extra-economic factors in a distinctive institutional matrix, vitiating, deferring or displacing (always provisionally and temporarily) the various contradictions encoded in capitalism's DNA and reproducing the capitalist mode of production (Aglietta, 1979; Tickell & Peck, 1995).

An adequate theorisation of periods of capitalist stability therefore requires a middle-range political economy account to complement Marx's more abstract identification of the basic tendencies of capitalism (Neilson, 2012). The utility of the PRA is that it is equipped with a suite of concepts that, although methodologically derived from Marx, are more concrete and historically sensitive, representing a key intermediate plane linking the abstract and the concrete.<sup>6</sup> Four such concepts are: an

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6 Indeed, the spiralling method of theory-construction employed by the PRA, in which the theoretical and the empirical are dialectically relativised to produce increasingly rich accounts of the 'concrete in thought,' demands this hierarchy of abstraction (Marx, 1973; Aglietta, 1979; Treuren, 1997). Unfortunately, the growing eclecticism of recent PRA work has threatened this method by increasingly cutting the school free from its Marxist foundations. In a 2002 collection detailing the state of the *régulationist* program (Boyer & Saillard, 2002), one short chapter was devoted to the school's linkages with Marxism, and that was as concerned with distancing the school from its Marxist heritage as embracing it. A desire for rapprochement with other research programs (such as the Varieties of Capitalism approach) has also threatened *régulationist* ideal-types (Neilson, 2012). For this reason, we have gravitated towards the work of early *régulationists*, while incorporating the labour of contemporary scholars working within the PRA tradition who retain its Marxist heritage, such as Neilson (2012) and Vidal (2013).



accumulation regime; mode of *régulation*; industrial paradigm; and model of development.<sup>7</sup> The content of these concepts has been discussed at length elsewhere (see Boyer, 1990; Lipietz, 1992; Jessop & Sum, 2006), so we can present their abstract form schematically before moving to a more detailed treatment of their particular relevance to this article.

- *Industrial paradigm* – a dominant model of labour process organisation governing the social and technical division of labour (such as mass production on semi-automatic production lines: Aglietta, 1979);
- *Accumulation regime* – a macro-level articulation of production and consumption reproducible over a long period (Jessop, 2013). Depending upon its articulation of Department 1 (producing means of production) and Department 2 (producing means of consumption), such a regime can be extensive or intensive in character (Aglietta, 1979);
- *Mode of régulation* – an emergent ensemble of norms, institutions and patterns of conduct that can stabilise an accumulation regime (Jessop & Sum, 2006). It includes the form of the wage-labour nexus, state structures, modalities of competition, money forms and insertion into the international economy; and
- *Model of development* – a coherent combination of an industrial paradigm, accumulation regime and mode of *régulation* (Lipietz, 1992).

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7 Of these, accumulation regime and mode of *régulation* are universal in PRA work. Less common are industrial paradigm and model of development. The former, although central to Aglietta's (1979) seminal work, does not assume the status of a discrete concept in most *régulationist* work (Dunford, 1990: 306). Our inclusion of this concept is premised upon Lukács' (1971: 90) insight that 'The internal organisation of a factory could not possibly have such an effect - even within the factory itself - were it not for the fact that it contained in concentrated form the whole structure of capitalist society.' The model of development concept is largely restricted to the work of Lipietz (1992, 2013). We consider this somewhat surprising given the fact that this concept holds the greatest promise for the PRA in escaping a perceived economic bias (Jessop & Sum, 2006) in that it conceives of a structured totality of economic, political and social forms.

### Fordism

The construction for which the PRA is most well-known is *Fordism*. Fordism has variously been used to describe a labour process, an accumulation regime, a mode of *régulation* or model of development. Most of the confusion arises from a simplistic popularising of *régulationist* ideas (Boyer, 1990; Hampson, 1991), but some conceptual slippage does afflict PRA work (see Jessop & Sum, 2006: 58-89). We follow Lipietz (1992) and Heino (2013) in defining Fordism as a model of development, which denotes that Fordism must be conceptualised and understood as the coherence of a structured totality.

According to Lipietz (1992), the ideal-typical Fordist model of development combined a Taylorist, mechanised labour process paradigm within large, multi-department firms, an autocentric mass production/mass consumption intensive accumulation regime synthesising full employment with rising productivity and real wages, and a mode of *régulation* involving a redistributivist welfare state that guaranteed effective demand through protective social legislation and the generalisation of mass consumption norms. The result was a system that tended to offset the various crisis tendencies of capitalism, as Vidal (2013: 458) notes:

A rise in the technical composition of capital was offset by a continuous rise in productivity generated by intensive growth, underconsumptionism offset by rising real wages and overproduction moderated through nationally bound, oligopolistic competition, again with balanced growth via standardized mass production and institutional supports for mass consumption.<sup>8</sup>

This model provides a substantive understanding of the physiology of the post-war long boom, particularly its mechanisms of coherence and potentialities for crisis.

Due to a combination of inter-related features, including the exhaustion of the productivity-realising potential of mechanised Taylorism in lead sectors (De Vroey, 1984), the resistance of workers to intensified exploitation and job fragmentation (Braverman, 1974; Aglietta, 1979),

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8 The success of this process was certainly aided by the massive devalorisation of capital that occurred during World War Two.

the internationalisation of production (Ivanova, 2011), the erosion of US hegemony, the 1970s oil shock and the crisis of the post-War Bretton Woods financial institutions (De Vroey, 1984), Fordist countries began to run into serious, and ultimately insurmountable, obstacles from the early 1970s onwards. This was reflected in the stumbling of productivity growth and the unprecedented phenomenon of ‘stagflation,’ combining high unemployment and inflation. This period extended into the 1980s, and was characterised by ‘institutional searching’ to escape the growing crisis and restore stable accumulation (Heino, 2013). Although developments in the late 1980s and 1990s bespoke of the growing coherence of a successor, a post-Fordist model of development (dubbed ‘liberal-productivism’ by Lipietz, 1992, 2013), it is the specific period of the zenith and subsequent crisis of Fordism which interests us here. If, however, Carey’s *War Crimes* is to be read as a commentary of Australian society in the 1970s, amenable to analysis from a PRA perspective, we must first sensitise the ideal-typical model of Fordism to the Australian context.<sup>9</sup>

### Antipodean Fordism

Applying the stylised features of Fordism to the Australian experience of the post-war boom reveals a model of development that, although recognisably Fordist, modifies some of its key abstract components. The Australian incarnation of Fordism thus combined:

- an industrial paradigm based on mass production but marked by a piecemeal incorporation of Taylorist forms of work control and organisation (Wright, 1993) with;

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9 The ideal-type employs, at a lower level of abstraction, Marx’s methodology in outlining the parameters of the capitalist mode of production, that is, bringing out and fixing the common logical elements whilst apprehending ‘no real historical stage’ (Marx, 1973: 88). Thus, Fordism does not describe the concrete experience of any one particular society. Rather, it serves as a heuristic identifying causal relationships and structures, which must be sensitised to particular empirical contexts if the model is to fulfil its analytical potential (Treuren, 1997). If this process of sensitisation is ignored, important features of national difference are elided and the experiences of the country closest to the ideal-type (in the case of Fordism, the USA) are reified.

- an intensive accumulation regime of mass production and mass consumption which was premised upon the ability of the export-oriented farming and mining sectors to underwrite high levels of industrial protection (Bell & Head, 1994); and
- a mode of *régulation* that precociously enshrined the Fordist wage-labour nexus in the arbitration system. This mode was characterised by the unification of the Australian welfare state's economic and social objectives/functions (Castles, 1994).

Following Heino (2014), we have dubbed this model of development *antipodean Fordism* (a term coined loosely by Rolfe, 2003).<sup>10</sup>

The unique institutional materiality and social ideologies associated with antipodean Fordism vested it both with its own mechanisms of coherence as well as distinctive trajectories of crisis. Both are of key relevance to our reading of *War Crimes*.

### Antipodean Fordism as a Tool of Literary Analysis

The notion of antipodean Fordism provides a unique departure point (from a political economy standpoint) for literary analysis, distinct from the approach taken by the literary theorists discussed above. We intend to use it to make two cuts through *War Crimes*. One axis of analysis will interrogate the text in light of the constitutive elements of antipodean Fordism and the features of its crisis. In this way we can determine to what extent *War Crimes* can be read as an allegory for the decline of antipodean Fordism and what the PRA can tell us about the forces and processes Carey's text is depicting. A second line of inquiry will be to analyse the place of *War Crimes* within the ideological conflict that accompanied the crisis of antipodean Fordism. Both readings require the understanding of the text as a simultaneously historical and ideological product explicated previously.

The second leg of the inquiry is particularly complex. Although the PRA has historically been concerned with the economy and the associated extra-economic structures that have ensured its reproducibility (Jessop & Sum, 2006), the method explicitly accords a key role to ideology,

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10 Antipodean Fordism has been superseded (from the mid-1980s onwards) by an Australian variant of liberal-productivism (Heino 2014).

particularly insofar as ideology serves as a unifying medium in a functioning model of development (Lipietz, 1992). This idea owes its heritage to Althusser's (1977) account of ideological state apparatuses. Unlike Althusser's (1977) concept, however, the PRA's emphasis on the provisional and contested character of accumulation would suggest that the field of ideological production is itself contradictory (a reality acknowledged by Eagleton, 1976a, 1976b).

Unlike slave or feudal societies, where surplus product is directly appropriated by coercive means, capitalism is characterised by the alienation of labour power (and with it surplus labour) by formally free workers (Wood, 2003). The resultant separation of the economic and extra-economic moments of exploitation (Wood, 2003) entails that conflict, both within the ideological sphere and in its articulations with the productive system, is endogenous. In turn, this suggests that the crisis of antipodean Fordism would be as much an ideological crisis as a material one. Within the process of institutional searching that characterised the decline of Fordism (Heino, 2013), ideological forays into responses to crises themselves help constitute a regulatory response or solution. Indeed, Jessop (1988) notes that the success of neo-liberalism was due in large part to its ideological forms, which were able to impose an intellectual order on a seemingly chaotic collection of events.

This explicit understanding of the dynamic relationship between crisis and ideology which the PRA allows is precisely what is lacking in work of the Marxist literary theorists discussed above. On this front, the union between literary theory and the PRA is a potentially fruitful one.

It is with this understanding that we will analyse the ideological content of *War Crimes*, particularly in so far as it presages the neo-liberal turn of the 1980s. Set in a bleak, barren outpost, the story follows the efforts of the narrator and his coterie in turning around a failing factory producing pre-packaged frozen meals. Their violent, non-traditional business methods in the context of mass unemployment, industrial decline and changed market conditions bespeak of a fundamental transformation in the fortunes of antipodean Fordism. It is to these we now turn.

## Antipodean Fordism and *War Crimes*: a Historical Analysis

Our first cut through the text re-examines it in light of our understanding of antipodean Fordism. In particular, we draw attention to moments within the narrative which can be read as representative of key changes within the constituent components of this model of development. By understanding the literary portrayal of these processes, we can demonstrate the impact that the crisis of antipodean Fordism had in Australia—from an explicitly cultural perspective—and more precisely ground the second leg of our inquiry: reading *War Crimes* as an ideological intervention.

The first constituent concept with which we will deal is the industrial paradigm of antipodean Fordism, namely one characterised by a mass productionist social division of labour organised technically by partially-realised, mechanised Taylorism.<sup>11</sup> The crisis of this paradigm had two inter-related manifestations within the Australian context, namely the exhaustion of the productivity-realising potential of Taylorism and the dilapidated state of fixed capital in the 1970s.

Despite the fact that Taylorism was incompletely realised in the Australian setting, it experienced the greatest diffusion in the manufacturing sector, particularly in basic process industries that were free from the influence of the powerful Amalgamated Engineering Union (virulently opposed to Taylorist management; Sheridan, 1975). Food processing industries proved particularly amenable to the mass production techniques of post-war Fordism, where efficiency and low unit costs resulted from the production of a small range of (often highly processed) food items (Burch and Lawrence, 2005).

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11 The debate over how to define Taylorism is one with a long genealogy; see for example, Braverman (1974), Taksa (1992), Wright (1993). We favour a broad definition that broaches both Taylorism as material practice and Taylorism as cultural ideology. We define Taylorism as a system which, in its ideal applications, unifies a radical separation between conception and execution in the labour process, a minutely organised description of work tasks organised by management and systems of individual work evaluation and measurement with an ideological framework that conceives all forms of traditional worker control over the labour process as illegitimate and management as the rightful repository of all industrial knowledge.

From the beginning of the 1970s, however, this paradigm began to become dysfunctional. The crisis of the labour process manifested itself in a number of ways, including the stagnation of labour productivity and a wave of trade union militancy, affecting the metals sector in particular (Bramble, 1989, 2008). Broomhill (2008: 21) notes how the 'Manufacturing industry, the engine of post-war growth, began to stumble as labour productivity growth rates fell from an average of 3.4 per cent between 1960–73, to 2.3 per cent between 1973–9 and then to 1.2 per cent between 1979–93.' The South Australian Policy Research Group & Political Economy Movement (1978: 82) describes how:

During this period absenteeism, labour turnover and industrial disputation reached record levels ... Workers were sick of alienating and inhuman production lines, filthy factories and low wages, they voted with their feet, followed the highest pay and stayed away from work often.

All these processes confront readers in the depiction of the production line in Carey's *War Crimes*. Upon his visit to the plant, for example, the narrator advises his readers that the production workers were 'doing operations that had been perfectly described on the production report' (p. 325), suggesting a system that is fundamentally Taylorist in its radical separation of conception and execution.

Similarly, the narrator's tour of the factory reveals the technical limitations of this paradigm in its representation of the workforce. Aglietta (1979) and Lipietz (1992) both argue that the continuing intensification of the labour process exacted a heavy toll on workers physically and mentally. The physical burden on the workers is manifested in *War Crimes* when the narrator relates how his father lost a hand in a factory accident (p. 323) and is reinforced when he describes one of the female workers on the production line who suffers from 'a heat rash that extended from her forehead to her hands' (p. 325). The mental affliction is emphasised when he admits that the workers' days are a 'never-ending [procession of] loud, metallic, [and] boring' activities carried out in a filthy, hot and fume-ridden tin-shed of a factory (p. 326). Huggan (1996: 1) argues that the nightmarish conditions 'are in part, the products of the "dream factories" of late capitalism.'

Both of the scenes described above tell of the costs and limitations of Taylorism, whilst they also arguably provoke a negative reaction in

Carey's readers, reinforcing our assertion that the novella may be read as an attempt at ideological intervention.

The second, related dimension of the crisis of antipodean Fordism's industrial paradigm was the poor state of Australian fixed capital by the 1970s. Wilshire (1979) notes that, in the late 1970s, only 25% of Australian industrial equipment was less than ten years old, a figure that compared poorly with other industrialised nations such as Japan and the United States. Stewart (1991) also found that the regime of heavy industrial protection tended to stunt technological innovation and rewarded production geared towards domestic, rather than global, consumption/accumulation. This in turn reduced the ability of manufacturers to gain from efficiencies of scale and further undermined the competitive position of domestic industry.

The dilapidated condition of the Australian capital stock is a theme conveyed by Carey in *War Crimes*. It is best illustrated when the narrator first encounters the food processing plant. The facilities strike him as:

nothing more than a collection of eccentric tin huts. One might expect them to contain something dusty and rotten, the leftovers from a foreign war in disordered heaps, broken instruments with numbered dials and stiff canvas webbing left to slowly rust and decay. Yet the plant was the largest frozen food processing and storage facility in the country (p. 313).

Likewise, the depiction of the production line suggests that the equipment is outdated (p. 325), and even with the creation of an ostensibly more pleasant atmosphere in the plant the machinery remains 'mid-twentieth-century' (p. 335). This reinforces the uniquely Australian twist to the generic, worldwide crisis of Fordism from the early 1970s onwards, something that imparted a distinct trajectory of crisis that saw Australian manufacturing devastated throughout the 1980s.

The next constituent moment of antipodean Fordism to which we turn is the regime of intensive accumulation. This involved an articulation of Department 1 and Department 2 (premised on the commodification of the proletariat's means of subsistence; Aglietta, 1979; Heffernan, 2000), resulting in a nexus between mass production and mass consumption in a self-reinforcing 'virtuous cycle'; productivity gains at the workplace level stemming from mass production techniques were translated into rising real wages, which elevated the levels of worker consumption, in



turn encouraging expanded production and fortifying the process (De Vroey, 1984; Lipietz, 1992). This system was predicated both on the ascendancy of domestic manufacturing (particularly certain lead sectors, such as metals and automobiles) and on a full employment economy in which the national working class was the main repository of effective demand.

*War Crimes* compels its readers to witness the descent of this structure into turmoil, in which the mechanisms that had previously ensured the coherence of the accumulation regime became dysfunctional. The first clue is the obvious reformulation of the post-war agri-food sector. The nature of Fordist goods, together with the privileged standing of the domestic manufacturing sector, ensured a supply chain structure dominated by food manufacturers (Burch & Lawrence, 2005). The role of retailers was as a mediating agent between manufacturer and consumer, marketing products whose quality and price were determined by the former (Burch & Goss, 1999).

The crisis of intensive accumulation was simultaneously a crisis of both production *and* consumption. The former manifested itself as a crisis of overproduction in the face of market saturation (a reality that affected Fordist countries generally; Kettell, 2006).<sup>12</sup> Fordist production was premised upon a continually expanding market, which proved ultimately unsustainable (Wilshire, 1979). The result of the subsequent overproduction is exemplified in the narrator's revelation that, 'The storerooms, at this moment, contained one and a half million dollars' worth of undistributed merchandise ... The goods had been sitting in the warehouse for two years' (pp. 313-314, 317). The torpor of product markets is heralded by the narrator's prescient observation of the future, 'Companies ... viewed the present circumstances as some temporary aberration and were planning their long-term strategies in the belief that we would shortly be returning to normal market conditions. My view was that we were experiencing "normal" market conditions' (p. 322). The narrator's assumption that "'normal" market conditions' had changed resonates with the feeling that Australia was witnessing the end of the golden era of Fordism, while also illustrating the tragically wasteful nature of the system in crisis.

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12 Bouts of overproduction are inscribed in the DNA of capitalism. We define them as episodes whereby a glut of goods cannot be sold at a price consonant with the realisation of the surplus value embodied in them; Marx (1990).

The crisis of consumption was primarily a function of both stagnating worker purchasing power and an increasing awareness on the part of consumers of the poor quality and variety of Fordist foodstuffs (Burch & Lawrence, 2005). Together with the declining stock of domestic manufacturing, these movements enabled retailers to begin to restructure supply chains to their own advantage. Retailers increasingly exerted control over manufacturers, determining what they produced and at what cost (Rosewarne, 1983). This power transition is impressed upon readers of the novella when the narrator notes how '[o]ur products had been delisted by five major chains and were in danger of being kicked out of another three' (p. 316). This reversal of the traditional position of manufacturer dominance *vis-à-vis* retailers was a necessary result of the fracturing of domestic intensive accumulation, and *War Crimes* satirises the absurd measures that were seen as essential to survive in this new marketplace.

An equally necessary product of this process was mass unemployment. The coherence of a nationally articulated intensive accumulation regime was in part predicated upon full employment (both as a means of guaranteeing high levels of effective demand and ensuring worker consent to the dominant industrial paradigm; Boyer & Durand, 1997). As has been explored by Heino (2013), however, this mechanism of coherence became dysfunctional for capital in that it institutionalised the bargaining power of the trade union movement, which increasingly came to be used for militant ends. A shifting of the focus from the maintenance of full employment to combating inflation was thus a deliberate strategy on the part of capital to undermine the strength of trade unionism (Harvey, 2010).

The depiction in *War Crimes* of the plight of the increasing number of unemployed people challenges readers to consider the impact of the breakdown of the full employment system. The description of unemployment as 'a way of life' (p. 311) would have been anathema to the structure of antipodean Fordism. Foreign to a social body accustomed to full employment, the out-of-work escape the comprehension of capital, conceived equally as a mere annoyance and an existential threat: 'Their inactivity sits most uneasily with their cancerous multiplication' (p. 328). Increasingly existing outside the established economic channels of capital, they can only be excised by extra-economic violence. The grotesque spectacle of the unemployed being incinerated by men wielding flame-throwers (p. 337) is emblematic of the complete

destruction of antipodean Fordist intensive accumulation and the reversal of its logic, and resonates with Elton's description of 'larrikin capitalism' as 'scorched earth capitalism' (cited in Turner, 1994: 38). The novella thus shows the move from a prevention of the existence of unemployment, to a situation where the unemployed now cease to exist.

The last constitutive concept of antipodean Fordism we must consider is its mode of *régulation*. This structure was uniquely precocious in how it enshrined the Fordist wage-labour nexus in the arbitration system. Through acting as an institutionalised class compromise between labour and capital, arbitration canalised conflict in an ordered fashion, preventing the kind of destructive, open class conflict that stretched the fabric of Australian society in the great strikes of the 1890s (Turner, 1976). This system itself became dysfunctional for capital, however, when it became both instrumental for the unification of the working-class (through the ability of strong unions concentrated in Fordist lead sectors, particularly metals, to flow-on pay and conditions gains to the workforce at large; Cochrane, 1988; Heino, 2013)<sup>13</sup> and ineffective for capital (through the prevalence of workplace-level over-award bargaining that increasingly usurped arbitration) (Dabscheck, 1994). Attacking this modality of industrial relations, both directly and indirectly, was thus a key dynamic in the prolonged crisis of antipodean Fordism.

The crisis of this element of the antipodean Fordist mode of *régulation* is apparent in *War Crimes* precisely because of its absence. At no point in the text is there any mention, explicit or implied, of this mainstay of Australian industrial relations. Neither is there reference to any form of trade unionism, central to the workings of arbitration (Higgins, 1915); a telling omission when, according to Eagleton, the presence of a text's ideology can be most significantly felt in its absences and gaps (1976b: 16). Indeed, in light of the behaviour of the New Right towards arbitration in the 1980s, Carey appears eerily prescient in *War Crimes*. The strength of the New Right reaction derived mainly from its evinced desire to break trade union power *outside* of the arbitration structure, often through the use of common law industrial torts and extra-legal coercion (Bramble, 2008). The impression left of major disputes at

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13 As is reflected in the existence of a comparatively compressed wage structure (Frijters & Gregory, 2006). The process was, of course, gendered, with female earnings lagging behind men's. Indeed, women only gained the formal right for pay equality as the boom was coming to an end in the early 1970s.

Mudginberri, Dollar Sweets and Robe River was of a militant fraction of capital increasingly willing to resort to violence, both legal and non-legal, to subdue labour and fundamentally usurp the arbitration system (Bramble, 2008). *War Crimes* necessarily exaggerates the results (*i.e.* complete abandonment) of an arbitration system that was increasingly becoming ineffectual. Although Hassall (1994) generally believes that literature is outside ideology, his comment that the narrator exposes the 'true dynamics from inside the system' (pp. 61-62), reinforces a confronting image of lawlessness and brute force constructed in the novella.

The willingness to resort to extra-legal means to suppress workers is thus a major theme running throughout *War Crimes*. In place of the institutionalised class compromise of arbitration, the narrator and his colleagues substitute a virulent gangster capitalism, one that explicitly relies on violence to ensure the real subordination of labour to capital.<sup>14</sup> The narrator admits to threatening the sales team 'with violence and torture if they did not succeed' (p. 316), whilst disobedience from one of his colleagues, Sergei, is met with murder, his head being put on the wire fence at the entrance to the plant as an example to others (pp. 332-334). The monstrosity of this new breed of capitalism is highlighted by the narrator's rationale for the execution; Sergei had been siphoning funds to improve the conditions of the plant, in the process reducing 'profits by 6.5 per cent' (p. 335). The narrator's ensuing madness is purposefully conflated with a system of capital that must have seemed to Carey equally destined to result in a kind of social madness.

Violence is also the tool used to disrupt another element of the Fordist mode of *régulation*, namely the internal architecture of enterprises and systems of promotion. Aglietta (1979, 177-178), in discussing the modality of stratification within the management class, notes how one pole of this structure is respect for authority, which is:

determined by the severe constraints specific to the structure of the enterprise, the performances required for promotion, the meagreness of the fragmented knowledge of the great majority of managerial staff and the commodity character that it assumes under capitalism...Respect for authority is also reinforced by

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14 For a useful discussion of the relationship between formal and real subordination, during both Fordism and into its decline, see Neilson (2007).

very significant cultural attitudes—the relations of protocol between superiors and inferiors in the hierarchy, the effacement of personality behind function... and the suppression of any independent opinions (our emphasis).

In the Australian context, these structures saw companies become industrial bureaucracies with a distinctly aristocratic air (Connell & Irving, 1980). Rightly or wrongly, this bureaucratisation was perceived as a cause of crisis, particularly where it encouraged complacency and a conciliatory approach to trade unionism. The management style of the 1980s was more hostile, more explicitly gain-driven and less likely to respect tradition where it interfered with performance (Cahill, 2010).

The clash of these management styles and the victory of the latter over the former are vividly captured in *War Crimes*. The narrator's secretary encapsulates the values and culture that formed the binding ideology of Fordist management. 'She was nearly forty-five, matronly in style' (p. 317); and associates education and status with outward manifestations of proper clothing and decorum (p. 318). Although the narrator is trusted by the company board, he uses his dress as a deliberate means of disrupting established norms (p. 311), with the result that his substantive, material power is not recognised in cultural terms as 'status' by the secretary: 'She thought I was a scruffy punk who had come to make a mess in her old boss's office' (p. 319).

Economic power versus symbolic capital, position versus prestige; these are the insoluble contradictions crystallised in the narrator/secretary clash. As Marx (1990: 344) predicted, 'Between equal rights, force decides.' The narrator shooting his secretary in the foot is emblematic of this process; in the face of irreconcilable conceptions of power, a resort to brute violence metaphorically cripples Fordist conceptions of management, supplanted by a kind of gangster capitalism with little respect for tradition.

## Conclusions

Written in 1978, *War Crimes* represents an intervention into the growing crisis of antipodean Fordism. If we are correct in reading the narrator as representative of the irrational logic of capital itself, then *War Crimes* is a distinct vision of how Carey sees this logic playing out. That it was written *before* a cogent New Right ideology had cohered in the 1980s is

evidence both of Carey's prescience and the fundamental strength of the analysis he forwards. It recognises both the terminal decline of the Fordist model of development, whilst inveighing against the evils of unrestrained capitalism. This reality supports the proposition that literature does not unproblematically codify and translate a dominant ideology. Instead, the contradictions of capital here assume a cultural form, and underwrite the literary form itself. In this article we have used the PRA as a tool to understand more precisely the forces described in *War Crimes* and to comprehend the novella itself as an intervention in the ideological turmoil accompanying the decline of antipodean Fordism.

We believe that this novel synthesis of the PRA and the study of literature opens up considerable opportunities for future research. Of particular interest would be comparative work studying the representations of antipodean Fordism at its inception and zenith, so that the full range of literary perspectives on this unique model of development could be gleaned. One might examine other of Carey's short stories, or David Ireland's novels *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner* (1971) and *The Glass Canoe* (1976). There are, however, few references in the major Australian literary histories, companions and anthologies to works of literature during this time period that would allow for an examination of the economic and social upheaval caused by the crisis of antipodean Fordism. Thus, it would be worthwhile to expand the literary canon that represents this period in Australia's history, as it would enable scholars to understand the full gamut of literary representations and projections of the future.

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